SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
VINDICATION
OF
God's Moral Character.

WHEREIN

Three Objections are examined; Two urged againſt the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God; and the other againſt Human Liberty.

To which is added,

The Caſe of *Abraham* with Regard to his offering up *Iſaac* in Sacrifice, Re-examined.

In a LETTER to a CLERGYMAN.

By *THO. CHUBB.*

LONDON:

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A SUPPLEMENT TO THE VINDICATION OF *God's Moral Character.*

IT being thought by ſome, that in my *Vindication of God's Moral Character*, I have not ſo fully vindicated the Divine Conduct as might have been expected from a Performance of that kind; I think it proper to offer what follows by way of

Anſwer to what has been urged on this Head. And,

TO make way for a Difficulty in the preſent Caſe, the following Principles are laid down, *viz. Firſt*, That God perfectly foreknows in what Inſtances, and to what Degree, every Man will be virtuous or vicious, before his Formation or Conception. *Secondly*, That there are ſome Perſons, who, in fact, prove to be exceedingly vicious, by their being guilty of a great deal of *Moral Evil* with reſpect to themſelves; and thereby introduce a great deal of natural Evil, or *Unhappineſs* upon others. And *Thirdly*, That as there are ſome *Actions* neceſſary to human Formation or Conception; ſo there are a Multitude of thoſe Actions which take place, and yet no Conception follows.

THESE Things being premiſed, from hence it is argued, that either God does *immediately interpoſe*, and by his particular Providence render all thoſe Actions ſucceſsful upon which human Conception depends,

depends, in all thoſe Inſtances wherein Conception does follow or accompany ſuch Actions; or elſe he *does not* interpoſe, as afore-ſaid, but leaves that Affair to be conducted by thoſe Laws by which the natural World is governed. If the *firſt* is the Caſe, then it would be an Inſtance of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* for God *not* to interpoſe in all thoſe Caſes upon which the Lives of all vicious Perſons depend, and thereby to prevent the Exiſtence of ſuch Perſons: whereas, by his interpoſing, as afore-ſaid, he does manifeſtly occaſion a Multitude of Evil. But if the latter be the Caſe, then it would be an Inſtance of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* for God *to interpoſe*, and by his particular Providence to render the Conception of all vicious Perſons *abortive*: whereas, his forbearing to do this, is a manifeſt Inſtance of the contrary.

WITH reſpect to the *firſt* Branch of the Objection, it is ſufficient to anſwer, That God *does not* interpoſe, as afore-ſaid, to render thoſe Actions ſucceſsful upon which human Conception depends; Conception

ception being as much the *Produce of*, and under the Direction of the *Laws* of *Nature*, as any other Branch of this Syſtem of things; and thoſe Laws are as exactly *complied with* and followed in all thoſe Inſtances in which Conception does, as in thoſe Inſtances in which it does not follow or accompany ſuch Actions.

WITH reſpect to the latter Part of the Objection, the Anſwer is, That if it would be an Inſtance of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* for God thus immediately *to interpoſe*, and thereby to prevent Evil, by preventing the Exiſtence of all vicious Perſons, as afore-ſaid; then it would be *a like* Inſtance of Wiſdom and Goodneſs for him immediately to interpoſe and prevent every *Shipwreck*, every *injurious Fire*, yea, every *Evil* of every kind. The Conſequence of which would be the conſtant *ſuſpending* of thoſe Laws by which the natural World is governed. So that the Objection in its laſt Reſult, amounts to this, namely, That it would have been an Inſtance of Wiſdom and Goodneſs for God *not* to have given Being

to

to this World. But this Objection cannot be of weight, except it can be made appear that there has been *more Unhappineſs* than *Happineſs* introduced by it.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That tho Things cannot be otherwiſe than they are in this Reſpect, in the preſent ſtate of things; yet God might, if he had pleaſed, have *prevented* the Exiſtence of all vicious Perſons, by giving ſuch Laws to the natural World as would have introduced none but Perſons of *Virtue* and *Honour*:

I ANSWER, That Vice is not occaſioned by any *Defect* in the Law of Nature; but, on the contrary, it ariſes from that *Liberty* and Freedom of action which takes place in every *moral Agent*. The * human Compoſition is excellently conſtituted to ſerve the Purpoſes of Virtue and true Goodneſs; and upon the whole, tends to render Man an *agreeable* and a

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* *See my* Vindication of God's Moral Character.

uſeful

uſeful Creature. But then, as Man is a moral Agent, he muſt be at liberty to *direct* or *reſtrain* his Inclinations and Endeavours, either to ſerve the Purpoſes of Virtue, or the contrary: So that when Vice takes place, this is ſo far from being the Produce of the Laws of Nature, that, on the contrary, it is the *Perverſion* and *Abuſe* of thoſe Laws; and ſuch Abuſe is the Subject of every Man's *free Choice*. So that to ſay, God might have given ſuch Laws as would have prevented this Evil, is the ſame as to ſay that he might have prevented our *Agencys*.

BESIDES, this Objection is founded upon a Suppoſition, that God *foreknows* in what Inſtances, and to what Degree, every Man will be either virtuous or vicious, before his Formation or Conception. But this is only *preſumed*, and not proved: And therefore as the *Strength* of the Objection chiefly depends upon the *Truth* of this Suppoſition, ſo till this Point is *proved*, the Objection cannot be of any weight. Again,

SECONDLY, It is urged, that whereas all the *moral*, and a great Part of the *natural Evil* which is in the World, is occaſioned by that *Liberty* and Freedom of action which takes place in Man ; and, whereas God *foreknew* that Man would *abuſe* that Liberty, and that he will be *ſeverely puniſhed* in another World for that Abuſe : therefore Liberty, upon the whole, is a *Curſe* and not a Bleſſing ; it being better for Man not to have this *Power*, than to have it and be *liable* to abuſe it : And, conſequently, as the *withholding* this Gift from Man would have been an Inſtance of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, ſo the making Man a *free Creature*, is a manifeſt Inſtance of the contrary.

I ANSWER, *Firſt*, Whether God does or does not abſolutely foreknow the Actions of Men, is a diſputable Point, which (I think) cannot be *abſolutely determined* on either ſide : and therefore the Divine Preſcience ought not to be brought into the Caſe ; becauſe, to argue from thence, is to draw Concluſions from

 uncertain

uncertain Principles. And as to the Puniſhment which will be inflicted on vicious Men in another World, this will be done in a way perfectly *conſiſtent* with Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs.

AND whereas, in the Objection, Man is ſuppoſed capable of *exiſting*, and enjoying the *Pleaſures* he now taſtes, tho *deſtitute* of Liberty; and that God might have *given* or *withheld* this Power from him as he pleaſed: This, I think, is a *wrong* Repreſentation of the Caſe; becauſe Liberty is *abſolutely neceſſary* to conſtitute ſuch a Creature as Man, and to render him *capable* of thoſe Pleaſures he now enjoys. The Pleaſures with which Man is here entertained, whether ſenſual, intellectual or moral, ſuppoſe him poſſeſſed of the Facultys of *Intelligence* and *Activity*, to render him capable of thoſe Pleaſures. So that where theſe Facultys are wanting, as in *Stones*, *Trees*, and the like, there is an utter *Incapacity* for the Enjoyment of thoſe Pleaſures: And if *Agency* is neceſſary to render a Creature capable of taſting the Pleaſures which this Globe affords, then

then *Liberty* is neceſſary; becauſe, ſtrictly ſpeaking, Agency and Liberty are the ſame thing. So that the Queſtion will be at laſt reſolved into this, namely, Whether it be *conſiſtent* with, or rather, whether it be an *Inſtance* of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, or of the contrary, for God to call ſuch a Creature as *Man* into being. To which I anſwer,

SECONDLY, That Man, as a free Creature, comes under a twofold Conſideration, *viz. Firſt*, As a Species of Beings, who ſtand related to the reſt of the *animal World*; and in the Exerciſe of their Liberty, are the *Occaſion* of both Evil and Good to them. And, *Secondly*, As a Species of Beings, who in the Exerciſe of their Liberty, are *introductive* of both Evil and Good to *each other*.

IF we conſider Man as he ſtands related to the reſt of the animal World, in this View the *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs* of God are abundantly diſplayed; becauſe Man, in the Exerciſe of his Liberty, is introductive of much more *Happineſs* to the

Animals below him, than the contrary. For tho ſome particular *Animals*, or ſome particular *Species* of them, may receive *more Evil* than Good from the Hands of Men; yet this is by no means the Caſe with reſpect to the animal World in general. It is by Man's *Labour* and *Induſtry* that the Earth is cultivated and improved; by which means it yields a plentiful Increaſe for their Uſe. It is Man who watches the Seaſons, and gathers in the Summer to preſerve them in the Winter; and makes that Proviſion for them which they are by no means capable of doing for themſelves. So that thro' the Care and Induſtry of Man, Multitudes are called into being, which otherwiſe would have no Exiſtence. And as to thoſe that would have exiſted, the Lives of Multitudes of them are rendered *more happy*, and their Deaths *leſs afflictive* than otherwiſe they would have been. This, I think, will appear to be the Caſe, if we conſider the Species of Mankind, as *ſeparated* from this Globe: So that, I think, it may be truly ſaid that Man is a *Bleſſing*, or an

Inſtance

Inſtance of Divine Goodneſs to the *animal World.* Again,

IF we conſider Man as a Species of Beings who ſtand related to, and in the Exerciſe of their Liberty are the Cauſe of both Evil and Good to each other; in this View alſo, the producing of Man into being will appear to be an Inſtance of Divine *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs.* Man in his natural Compoſition is not only *capable* of Happineſs, but he is likewiſe excellently conſtituted to promote and carry on the *common Happineſs* of his Kind. So that the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God are abundantly ſhewn in the human *Make* and *Conſtitution:* And tho Man is capable of *viciating* his Nature, and *abuſing* his Liberty, and thereby brings Unhappineſs upon himſelf and others of his Species; yet, I think, this ought not to be a *Bar* to his Exiſtence, becauſe, upon the whole, the Evil introduced by the Abuſe of Man's Liberty, is by no means equal to the Good introduced by a right Uſe of it.

IT is true, that Men are too apt to abuſe their Liberty, to ſerve the Purpoſes of *Vice* and *Wickedneſs*; and that there are *ſome Perſons* and *ſome Places*, and perhaps *ſome Seaſons*, in which Vice runs much higher than in others. But as to the *generality* of Men and of *their Actions*, if the Caſe could be fairly examined, I imagine, that Virtue and Happineſs would appear to have much the *Precedency* in them over their Contrarys.

FOR tho the Inſtances of Perſons *extraordinarily virtuous* are but few, when compared with the generality of Mankind; yet that is likewiſe the Caſe of thoſe who are *extraordinarily vicious*. The Bulk of Mankind, as their *Actions* and *Characters* are mixed, partly good and virtuous, and partly evil and vicious; ſo they abound in the *former* more than in the latter. And this, I think, would evidently appear to be the Caſe, if Men would judge impartially from their own Experience herein: Then I imagine they would be forced to confeſs, that they have in the Courſe of their

their Lives met with many more Inſtances of *Truth* and *Honeſty*, of *Kindneſs* and *Beneficence*, than of their Contrarys. I ſpeak this of the generality of Mankind.

MEN are generally more inquiſitive about the *bad* than the *good* Deeds of their Neighbours; by which means the former of theſe furniſhes out *Materials* for Converſation, much more than the latter: So that Mens *good Works lie concealed*, whilſt their evil Deeds are publiſhed upon the Houſe-top. Beſides, *one* vicious Action (like a dead Fly in the Ointment of Perfume) ſpoils a Man's Character, and makes all his good Deeds to be *over-looked*, or elſe looked on with an *evil Eye*. Moreover, Men are apt to have a much *quicker* Senſe of the Injurys done them, than of the Benefits they receive from each other. And all theſe give occaſion for a *loud Clamour*, and raiſe an *invincible Prejudice* againſt our Species: every one being ready to complain of the general Prevalency of Vice, tho no one will allow the Charge to be juſt with reſpect to himſelf. If each

Individual

Individual ſhould be charged with having been more frequent in the Practice of *Falſehood* and *Injuſtice*, of *Cruelty* and *Inhumanity*, than of the contrary Virtues; I imagine there are but few who would plead guilty. Upon the whole, I think, there is *juſt Ground* to preſume that it would appear, if it could be tried, that Mankind (bad as they are, or as their Caſe may be repreſented by an artful Complainer) have much more *Virtue* than *Vice* amongſt them; and, conſequently, that the calling them into being, is a manifeſt Inſtance of Divine *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*. And,

THO ſome Men will be puniſhed with *unſpeakable Miſery* in another World for their *vicious* Behaviour here; yet I think that ought not in reaſon to bar a *wiſe* and *good God* from calling our Species into being: ſince it is much more *unreaſonable* and *unkind* on the other ſide, for God to *withhold* his Kindneſs and Benevolence from a Species of Beings, merely becauſe ſome of that Species will fooliſhly and wickedly *exclude themſelves* from being

Sharers

Sharers in it, and bring upon themſelves extreme Miſery. Again,

THIRDLY, It has been likewiſe objected, That I have not gone to the *bottom*, nor reach'd the *main Difficulty* urged againſt *human Liberty*, *viz.* That as *Motive* is the Excitement to Action; ſo a Man is as much *forced* or *compelled* to act by that Excitement, as a Stone is to fall to the Earth when it is thrown up into the Air: becauſe he not only *does*, but he *muſt* act according to the laſt or *final Judgment* of his Underſtanding; that is, he *will* and *muſt* always do what he judges *beſt* at the time, it being impoſſible for him to do otherwiſe.

THIS I think I have fully * anſwered in the Pamphlet referred to; wherein I have ſhewn, that Motive is not a *Power* or *active Cauſe*, but barely a *paſſive* Reaſon of the Action: and in which I have likewiſe ſhewn, that a Man is not under

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* Vindication of God's Moral Character.

a *Neceſſity* of doing what he judges beſt at the time, whether the Term *beſt* be uſed to ſignify what is judged beſt upon the *whole*, or what is judged will give him the *greateſt preſent Pleaſure*.

THE Caſe is the ſame, whether the Term *beſt* be uſed to ſignify what is beſt for a *Man's-ſelf*, or what is beſt for the *Publick*, or the like. In which Caſes it is moſt evident, that no Man is under a *Neceſſity* of doing what he judges beſt at the time, taking the Term *beſt* in any one Reſpect whatever. The ſame Perſon at one time chuſes to gratify a natural Inclination, without entring into the *Queſtion*, whether that Gratification upon the whole, be beſt or not: At another time he reſolutely follows his Inclination, tho under a Conviction that that Gratification upon the whole is *wrong*: And at another time he chuſes to deny himſelf that preſent Pleaſure, becauſe he is convinced that upon the whole it is *Evil*. And therefore to ſay that this Perſon did in all theſe Inſtances do what he judged beſt at the time, is to fix to the Term *beſt* *different* and *contrary*

trary Ideas, and to introduce the utmoſt Confuſion.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That tho a Man does not always do what he judges beſt at the time, ſuppoſing the Term *beſt* be uſed in the ſame Reſpect, yet he does always do what he judges beſt, uſing that Term in one Reſpect or other:

I ANSWER, Admitting this to be true, yet it is not to the Purpoſe: The being beſt at the time, that is, the giving the greateſt preſent Pleaſure, and the being beſt upon the whole, theſe are *different* and *contrary Ideas*, when they come in competition; that is, when one is an Excitement to act, and the other is an Excitement to the contrary: which is frequently the Caſe. So again, the being beſt for a Man's-ſelf, and the being beſt for the Publick, are different and contrary Ideas, when they come in competition, as aforeſaid. And therefore, as there is not any thing in the human Compoſition which *neceſſarily determines* a Man to prefer a preſent Good to what is beſt upon

the whole; nor what is beſt upon the whole, to what will give him the greateſt preſent Pleaſure; nor to prefer his own Intereſt to that of the Publick, nor the publick Intereſt to his own: So from hence it will follow, that *Action* in either Caſe is the Produce, not of *Neceſſity*, but of *Liberty*. If he prefers a preſent Pleaſure to what is beſt upon the whole, or if he chuſes otherwiſe when theſe come in competition, he is *voluntary* herein; he might, if he had pleaſed, have choſe the contrary. Again, if a Man prefers his own Intereſt to that of the Publick, or prefers the Publick to his own, in either Caſe it is a manifeſt Inſtance of *Liberty*; ſeeing there is not any thing in Nature which neceſſarily determines him to be either *generous* or *ſelfiſh*. So that the giving ſuch a Latitude to the Term *beſt*, does not affect the Caſe at all.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That when a Man prefers a preſent good to that which is beſt for him upon the whole; he then judges that beſt which is the Subject of

of his preſent Choice, or elſe he would not chuſe it :

I ANSWER, This is a Miſtake : for if a Man chuſes a preſent Pleaſure in *oppoſition* to that which is beſt upon the whole, when he makes the *Compariſon* between them ; then it is impoſſible for him to chuſe the former, under the Conſideration of its being *beſt*, becauſe it is impoſſible for a Man to judge it beſt in the preſent Caſe. It is not poſſible, in the nature of the thing, for a Man to judge, that a preſent *momentary Pleaſure* is really better than a *future Good*, that is vaſtly *greater* in it-ſelf, and a thouſand times more *durable*. The latter of theſe will unavoidably appear beſt to every *moral Agent* ; it being above the Power of every ſuch Agent to over-rule his Judgment, and thereby to make himſelf think otherwiſe : I ſay, this will unavoidably be the Caſe, if he takes a *View* of theſe, and makes a *Compariſon* betwixt them ; but if he makes no ſuch Compariſon, then there is no place for the Term *beſt* in the preſent Queſtion ; then the preſent Pleaſure becomes a *Motive*

tive to Action, not under the conſideration of its being beſt, but under the conſideration of its being a *preſent Pleaſure*. And tho a Man cannot command his Judgment, and make himſelf think that that Pleaſure is really *preferable* to a vaſtly greater and more durable future Good; yet he can command his Actions: And herein conſiſts his *Liberty*, he can *give* or *deny himſelf* that Pleaſure as he pleaſes.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That in this Caſe a Man does what he judges beſt at the time, not as beſt when compared with a greater Good; but in oppoſition to Self-denial, he judges it better at that time to gratify his Inclination than to deny it:

I ANSWER: That Men do ſometimes *prefer* a preſent Pleaſure to Self-denial, is allowed; but that a Senſe of preſent Pleaſure *compels* them to chuſe it, this is denied upon good Grounds, *viz.* becauſe every Act of Self-denial is an *Inſtance* of, and thereby an *evident Proof* of the contrary.

IF it ſhould be urged, That when a Man denies himſelf as afore ſaid, he then judges Self-denial beſt; not beſt, conſidered as Self-denial, but as it leads to a greater future Good:

I ANSWER, That to uſe the Term *beſt* in ſo *looſe* and *confuſed* a way as above, ſometimes making it to ſignify what is beſt in one Reſpect, and when that will not anſwer the Purpoſe, then to make it ſignify what is beſt in another Reſpect; and when that will not do, then to tack about to the former Senſe of the Term *beſt*, and ſo on: I ſay, thus to ring the Changes upon the Term *beſt*, is to *play* with Words, and looks more like *Banter* than *Argument*.

THE

THE
CASE
OF
ABRAHAM,

With Regard to his

Offering up *Isaac* in Sacrifice,
Re-examined.

In a LETTER to a CLERGYMAN.

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THE CASE OF ABRAHAM,

With Regard to his Offering up Isaac in Sacrifice, Re-examined.

THE CASE OF *ABRAHAM* Re-examined.

Reverend SIR,

WHEN I had the Happineſs of being in your Company ſome few Days paſt, you were pleaſed to query, whether what I have formerly ſaid in a Diſcourſe concerning *Property*, with reſpect to *Abraham*'s *offering up* Iſaac *in Sacrifice*, did not *claſh*

with what I have lately ſaid upon that Point, in the *Supplement* to my *Previous Queſtion*. This Query has given me occaſion to *re-examine* the Subject, the Reſult of which I beg leave to lay before you in the following Obſervations. And,

Firſt, I HERE take for granted (as being already elſewhere proved) the following Propoſition, namely, That *God is abſolutely wiſe and good*; that is to ſay, God always (without the leaſt Variation) conducts his Actions by the Rules of *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*: or, in other words, he always does that which upon the whole is *beſt*, or moſt ſubſervient to the common Good. And therefore if I have at any time paſt advanced, or endeavoured to maintain any Propoſitions which are *inconſiſtent* with the above Propoſition, all ſuch Propoſitions I now *retract as erroneous*.

I THOUGHT it proper to make this Remark, in order to prevent all Objections of this kind. For, ſuppoſing that at different times I ſhould advance two Pro-

Propoſitions *inconſiſtent* with each other, all I think that would follow from hence is, that my Judgment of the ſame Point has been *different* at *different times:* which ſurely is a common Caſe with thoſe Men whoſe Opinions are the Reſult of a free Inquiry, and are not taken upon truſt. I ſay, this is all that will follow, ſuppoſing the Caſe as above: for, as to the Propoſitions themſelves, their *Truth* or *Falſeneſs* does not depend upon my advancing them, but upon the *Strength* or *Weakneſs* of the Evidence which attends them. Again, I obſerve,

Secondly, THAT *Abraham* ſtood to *Iſaac* in the Relation of a *Father*; that is, voluntarily became the Inſtrument of bringing *Iſaac* into being: and from hence he became naturally obliged to *guard* and *protect* that Life, which he had, by a voluntary Act, been the Inſtrument of introducing. For, as Life to *Iſaac* was a *natural Good*, ſo it muſt be right and fit that every Perſon, but more eſpecially he who *introduced* it, ſhould guard and ſecure that Good to him, provided *Iſaac* did nothing

to

to *forfeit* his Title to Life, and conſequently his Title to that Protection; and whilſt no *Circumſtance* attended his Caſe, which might render his Life *injurious* to the common Happineſs, or any other way render it *fit* that he ſhould die. This I take to be a ſelf-evident Propoſition.

BY natural Obligation, I mean that it was *right* and *fit* in the nature of the thing, that *Abraham* ſhould guard and protect the Life of *Iſaac*, as aforeſaid. Which Obligation as it is founded in Nature, ſo it is *independent* of, and *antecedent* to any Divine Command; yea, it is antecedent to the *Conſideration* of a *Deity*, becauſe it muſt and would be the ſame, if there were no ſuch thing as a Deity.

NOW if this be the Caſe, then I think it will unavoidably follow, that no *ſubſequent divine Command* could poſſibly *cancel* or take off the aforeſaid natural Obligation; it being a manifeſt Abſurdity, and a Contradiction in Terms, to ſay that a natural Obligation *ariſes from*, or is *deſtroyed by* a divine Command: For if

it

it depends upon a divine Command, then it is not natural in the Senſe I here uſe that Term. And,

IF the divine Command could not make void the natural Obligation which *Abraham* was under, then I think it will follow, that the *giving* ſuch a Command with an Intent that it ſhould be obeyed, muſt be *wrong*; and conſequently, that *Obedience* to ſuch a Command muſt be wrong alſo. But God did not intend that the Command given to *Abraham* ſhould be obeyed, as is evident by his recalling it. This I take to be the manifeſt State of the Caſe. Again, I obſerve,

Thirdly, THAT as *Life* is a *natural Good*, as it renders us capable of taſting thoſe Pleaſures, which the preſent ſtate of Things has furniſhed us with; ſo conſequently, *Death* is a *natural Evil*, whilſt we are capable of thoſe Pleaſures. Now, if this be the Caſe, as moſt certainly it is, then it will follow, that the taking away of Life *cauſleſly*, is, in the nature of the thing, *morally unfit*; becauſe it is a Bar to the Enjoyments of Life: And therefore, if

Abraham

Abraham had not been obliged to guard and protect the Life of his Son, yet it would have been unfit that he ſhould take it away. And if ſuch an Action would, in the nature of the thing, have been morally unfit, then no *Divine Command* could poſſibly change its Nature, and make it otherwiſe.

IF it ſhould be urged, That God has *originally* a *Property* in all his Creatures; and as he gives life to them, ſo it muſt be right and fit that he ſhould take it from them, *when* and in *what way* he pleaſes:

I ANSWER, *firſt*; What was fit for *God* to do, and what was fit for *Abraham* to do, are plainly two diſtinct Queſtions or Caſes. *God's Relation*, and *Abraham's Relation* to *Iſaac*, are here ſuppoſed to be *different:* which Relation is likewiſe ſuppoſed to be the *Ground* of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of their Actions, in either Caſe. And therefore ſuppoſing *God's* having a *Property* in *Iſaac*, rendered it fit that he ſhould take away *Iſaac's* Life, when and

in

in what way he pleaſed; yet it will not follow, that it was fit that *Abraham* ſhould do the like, ſeeing it is not here ſuppoſed that *Abraham* had any ſuch Property in *Iſaac*, as aforeſaid.

IF it ſhould be ſaid, That tho *Abraham* had no right to take away *Iſaac*'s Life, upon the account of Property; yet it was fit that he ſhould do it when under a *Divine Command*; ſeeing *he* who gave the Command had a Property in *Iſaac*, as aforeſaid:

I ANSWER; If *Abraham* had not been under a *natural Obligation* to guard and protect the Life of his Son, *antecedent* to the Divine Command; and, if Life had not been a *natural Good*, and the taking it away *cauſeleſly* a *moral Evil*, antecedent to that Command: then there might have been ſome *Reaſon* to inſiſt, that it was fit for *Abraham* to take away *Iſaac*'s Life, when commanded, as aforeſaid. But this is not the Caſe: For as *Abraham* became obliged, by his Relation to *Iſaac*, to guard and protect his Life, antecedent to any

divine Command: and, as the taking away of Life cauſeleſly, was, in the nature of the thing, morally unfit; ſo *God's Property* in *Iſaac*, could not poſſibly make void *Abraham*'s Obligations, nor *change* the nature of things, by making that Action fit, which, in the nature of the thing, is otherwiſe. Again,

I ANSWER, *Secondly*; That Property in any Subject, does not *leſſen* or *deſtroy* the natural Obligations of the Proprietor; and therefore it muſt be right and fit for him either to *exert* or *ſuſpend* his Power, with regard to that Subject, when the Circumſtances of the Caſe render it *fit* and *proper* ſo to do. Thus my *Ability* to convey my Mind to another by Words, is my *natural Property*; and yet I am obliged, in the nature of the thing, either to *exert* or *ſuſpend* the Exerciſe of that Power, as the *Circumſtances* of the Caſe render it *fit* and *proper* that I ſhould ſpeak my Mind, or be ſilent. In like manner, if by my Labour and Induſtry I acquire a *Property* in a *plentiful Eſtate*, my Property in that Eſtate would not leſſen

or

or take off the natural Obligations I am under to promote the *Happineſs* and *Well-being* of the reſt of my Fellow-Creatures; and therefore it would be fit that I ſhould uſe and employ the *Eſtate* which I had thus acquired a Property in, to promote the common Happineſs, as aforeſaid. The Caſe is the ſame with reſpect to every kind of Property, whether it be *original*, *natural*, or *acquired*. But,

THAT I may give a Caſe more directly to the preſent Purpoſe, I will ſuppoſe, that God had called a Creature into being, and had given it a Conſtitution which might run out to the Age of ſixty Years in a *State of Happineſs*; and that he had likewiſe made a plentiful Proviſion of all things, *neceſſary* and *conducive* to that Happineſs: Now the Queſtion is, whether it would be right and fit in the nature of the thing, for God, from *mere ſovereign Pleaſure*, to cut off that Creature in the midſt of his Days, when no ill Conſequence nor Inconvenience attended that Creature's Enjoyment of Life. And the Anſwer to this Queſtion is moſt

evident, namely, That ſuch an Action, in the nature of the thing, would be *morally unfit*, ſeeing it would be a *barring* that Creature of *thirty Years Felicity:* For as the letting ſuch a Creature live out its time, would be an Inſtance of *Wiſdom* and *true Goodneſs*; ſo the taking Life from it, would be a manifeſt Inſtance of the *contrary*. And, to ſay in this Caſe, that God had a *Property* in that Creature, would be to urge what does not alter the Caſe at all.

IF it ſhould be farther urged, That it is equally as fit for God *directly* and *immediately* to take away ſuch a Creature's Life, as it is for him to do it by an *Earthquake*, or a *Tempeſt*, or the like:

I ANSWER, This is putting a Caſe which is not to be admitted, becauſe, in ſtrictneſs, *God does not* take away the Life of thoſe Creatures who die by Earthquakes, *&c.* Death in theſe Caſes being an *accidental Evil*, which ariſes from the natural Frame and Conſtitution of the World, and which could not be prevented in

in the preſent ſtate of things, but by breaking in upon thoſe *Laws* by which the natural World is governed.

IF it ſhould be urged, That *God* could have recompenſed the loſs of Life to *Iſaac* an hundred-fold in another World; or he could have *raiſed him* again from the *Dead*, and placed him in a much better ſtate than he was in before; and that in theſe Caſes, *Iſaac* would have been no further a Sufferer than barely the *Pain* he felt in dying by the Hand of his Father: So that upon the whole, Death would have been a *Benefit* to him, and, conſequently, it would have been an Inſtance of *Divine Goodneſs* in taking Life from him:

I ANSWER, Suppoſing God ſhould at any time (as an Inſtance of his ſovereign Pleaſure) take away the Life of any of his Creatures, and then *recompenſe* that Loſs to them, as aforeſaid; yet this would not affect the Caſe with reſpect to *Abraham*, whoſe Relation and Obligations to *Iſaac*, would be ſtill the ſame. And therefore

therefore ſuppoſing it be admitted, that God might, if he pleaſed, have taken away the Life of *Iſaac*, as aforeſaid; yet it was *moſt unfit* that he ſhould do it by the Hand of *Abraham*.

GOD may, if he pleaſes, uſe various ways of calling Men out of this World; he could, by an *immediate Operation*, or an exerting of his Power, have ſo *ſtagnated* the Blood and Fluids in *Iſaac*'s Body, or thrown them into ſuch a *rapid Motion*, or taken a variety of other Methods, that would effectually and ſpeedily have put an End to *Iſaac*'s Life: And therefore for him to require *Abraham* to kill his Son, which Action in *Abraham* (ſuppoſing the Caſe to be as I have ſtated it above, and which I think is the preſent Caſe) would have been a breaking thro' an *Obligation* that no divine Command could poſſibly *cancel* or make *void*; which would have been a very bad *Precedent* to others, and have reflected *great Diſhonour* upon the *moral Character* of him who required it. All theſe Reaſons, I think, make it perfectly *unfit* that *Iſaac* ſhould die by the Hand

Hand of his *Father*; and, conſequently, that God ſhould *give* ſuch a Command with an Intent that it ſhould be obeyed, or that *Abraham* ſhould yield Obedience to it.

I AM ſenſible that it is ſome Mens Opinion, that if God had commanded *Abraham* to *hate* his Son, ſuch a Command would, in the nature of the thing, have been *morally unfit*: and yet thoſe Men inſiſt, that it was *right* and *fit* for God to require *Abraham* to take away *Iſaac*'s Life. This makes it neceſſary to enquire, what it is which renders the Paſſion of Hatred *vicious*; and, conſequently, what it is that would render ſuch a Command *unfit*. And here I preſume it will be admitted, that the viciouſneſs of Hatred conſiſts in its being *indulged beyond its due Bounds*, or in its being exerciſed upon a *wrong Object*; and that therefore it would have been *wrong* in *Abraham* to hate that Object, which, in the nature of the thing, he ought to *love*. Now, if this be the Caſe with reſpect to our *Paſſions*, then I think it muſt be the ſame with reſpect to our *Actions*;

tions; that is, it would have been equally as *wrong* for *Abraham* to take away that Life, which, in the nature of the thing, he ought to preſerve, as it would have been for him to *hate* that Perſon whom he ought to *love*. Again, I obſerve,

Fourthly, THAT I think *Abraham* could not, in the nature of the thing, have any *rational Satisfaction* that the aforeſaid Command was *Divine*. For, ſuppoſing he received Information in the preſent Caſe, either by a *ſtrong Impreſſion* upon his own Mind, or by a *Dream*, or a *Viſion*, or a Voice from *Heaven*, or by the Report of a Perſon whom he eſteemed an *Angel*, or the like; as he could not be *abſolutely certain* that he might not be *deluded*, nor *impoſed* upon in any of theſe Ways; ſo in the nature of the thing, the *moral Unfitneſs* of the Action (as in the preſent Caſe it muſt appear to be) was a *ſtronger Reaſon* againſt the Divinity of that Command, than any of thoſe *extraordinary Ways* in which that Command was conveyed to him could poſſibly be for it.

IF it ſhould be urged, Suppoſing that *Abraham* received his Information in the preſent Caſe, in the *ſame Way* in which he had received ſeveral divine Revelations before; and ſuppoſing this Revelation had been backed with a *Miracle*, or *Miracles*, in like manner as the former divine Revelations had been *confirmed* or *proved* to him to be ſuch: in this Caſe ſurely there would have been a juſt and rational Foundation for him to conclude that the Command was Divine.

I ANSWER; Admitting this to be the Caſe, then I think that *Abraham* would have been *more liable* to be deluded or impoſed upon, than otherwiſe he might have been. But it would by no means *juſtify* in Argument, or render ſuch a Concluſion *rational*, *viz.* that the aforeſaid Commandment was Divine. For,

1. SUPPOSING that *Abraham* had before received divine Revelations in or by *Dreams* a hundred times; yet ſurely it will not follow by a juſt Conſequence, that he

could not be *miſled* by *Dreaming*; but, on the contrary, he became ſo much the more in *Danger* of being *deluded*. In this Way, his receiving *frequently* divine Revelations by Dreams, might render him the *leſs* upon his *Guard*; and he might hereby be more eaſily led to think, that *every Dream* was a *divine Revelation*. The Caſe is the ſame in any other way in which he might receive his Informations: His not being impoſed upon in *many* Inſtances, is not a good Argument to prove that he was not, or could not be impoſed upon in the ſame way in *one*; becauſe the latter will not follow by a juſt Conſequence from the former. Again,

2. SUPPOSING that the Command for *Abraham* to kill his Son, had been backed with a *Miracle*, or *Miracles*, in like manner as ſeveral divine Revelations had before been confirmed or proved to him to be ſuch; yet this does not prove the fore-mentioned Command to be Divine. Miracles are directly and immediately Evidences only of the *Power*, and not of the *Veracity* or *Goodneſs* of the Agent that performs

performs them. So that when any thing farther is to be concluded from them, that Concluſion muſt ariſe from the *Purpoſes*, that the Power which is ſhewn by thoſe Miracles is made ſubſervient to. And therefore as *Abraham* juſtly concluded, that thoſe former Revelations backed with Miracles were *Divine*, becauſe the Purpoſes were *good* which thoſe Revelations and that Power were made ſubſervient to; ſo by a like way of reaſoning it would follow, that there was a *ſtrong Probability* that the Command in the preſent Caſe was not Divine, becauſe this Revelation, and the Miracles wrought in its favour, were (to appearance at leaſt, and as far as he could judge) made ſubſervient, not to a good, but to an *evil Purpoſe*.

IF it ſhould be urged, That what I have ſaid ſeems to be contrary to what is ſaid of *Abraham*, and contrary to the Commendation given of him both in the *Old* and *New Teſtament*:

I ANSWER; What is ſaid of *Abraham* in the preſent Caſe is as follows.

Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18. *Becauſe thou haſt done this thing, and haſt not withheld thy Son, thine only Son; that in bleſſing I will bleſs thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea-ſhore. And thy Seed ſhall poſſeſs the Gate of his Enemies; and in thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed, becauſe thou haſt obeyed my Voice.* Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. *By Faith* Abraham *when he was tried, offered up* Iſaac; *and he that had received the Promiſes, offered up his only begotten Son; of whom it was ſaid, that in* Iſaac *ſhall thy Seed be called: accounting that God was able to raiſe him up even from the Dead, from whence alſo he received him in a Figure.* James ii. 21, 22, 23. *Was not* Abraham *our Father juſtified by Works, when he had offered up* Iſaac *his Son upon the Altar? Seeſt thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was Faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which ſaith,* Abraham *believed God, and it was accounted unto him for Righteouſneſs: and he was called the Friend of God.* This I think

think is all that is ſaid in the *Bible*, with regard to the Point in hand: From all which it evidently appears, that *Abraham*'s firm *Truſt* and *Confidence* in God, that he would make good his Promiſe to him, and his ſtrict *Honeſty* and *Integrity*, which were ſhewn by his ſteddy Reſolution to do what he *judged* to be his Duty in ſuch a trying Inſtance; theſe alone are what *Abraham* ſtands in the *Bible* ſo highly commended for, and which are made the *Ground* of God's extraordinary Favours to him. As to the *Goodneſs of Abraham*'s *Judgment*, or the *Juſtneſs* of his *Reaſoning*, the Bible takes no notice of it; neither does it once meddle with thoſe Queſtions, *viz.* Whether *Abraham* had or had not any *rational Satisfaction* that the Command was *Divine*, or whether the Action was *fit* or *unfit*; but leaves them to be diſcovered from the Nature of the Subject. But to conclude, I obſerve,

Fifthly, and laſtly, WHAT great *Difficulties* Men are thrown into, in order to *excuſe* and *juſtify* the Conduct of *Almighty God*, and of his Servant *Abraham*, in

in the Caſe I have been conſidering. Mens *Inventions* have been put upon the *Wrack*, in order to find out Ways to reconcile the *Divine Command* with the Principles of *Morality*; and they have been led almoſt to give up the natural Diſtinction of *Good* and *Evil*, and to reſolve it all into the *arbitrary Will of God*. Whereas the Caſe is not ſo *deſperate* as this ſuppoſes it to be: For tho God did give ſuch a Command, yet it was not with an Intent that it ſhould be obeyed, as the Event ſhewed. And tho *Abraham* thought it was right to yield Obedience to the Command, yet (ſuppoſing him to be miſtaken) this only ſhewed the *Weakneſs* of his *Judgment* in that Particular, but not that he had *a vicious Mind*: and therefore his moral Character is not *blemiſhed* hereby.

AS for thoſe Queſtions, namely, *Why* God gave this Command, and what were the *wiſe Purpoſes* he intended to ſerve by it, the Scripture has given no farther account than that it was by way of *Trial* to *Abraham*: and therefore whatever is offered beyond this, is but *Conjecture*.

THUS

THUS in the *Supplement to the Previous Queſtion*, I obſerved, that God gave the Command to *Abraham* with an Intent to recall it, and thereby to ſhew to *Abraham* and to all his Poſterity the *Unfitneſs* of all *human Sacrifices*. But herein I intended no more than a bare Conjecture, *viz.* that God *might* give and recall the Command, to anſwer the wiſe and good Purpoſe aforeſaid: To which I here add, That the Command *might* be given in order to convince *Abraham*, that even his *Honeſty* and *Integrity*, when not under the Direction of his Underſtanding, might *miſlead* him in the conducting of his Actions; of which (to appearance at leaſt) this was an Inſtance. And tho theſe are mere Conjectures, yet I cannot ſee why they ſhould be given up, before ſome *better* Reaſon for the Command be offered; ſeeing they are ſutable to that *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, by which God always directs his Actions.

I HAVE here but juſt touched upon the Caſe of *Miracles*, becauſe poſſibly ſome time

[illegible] or other I may [illegible] that Subject [illegible] Judge.

THESE are the Reflections which your *Query* has occasioned: I submit them to your Consideration, and crave leave to subscribe my self,

Reverend SIR,

Your most Humble Servant, &c.

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